



Migrant Forum in Asia Statement for international Women's day 8th March 2012

On the occasion of International Women's Day Migrant Forum in Asia stands in solidarity with the global community in celebrating the 2012 theme : "Empower Rural Women — End Hunger and Poverty."

Rural women comprise around 43 per cent of the agricultural labour force in developing countries, and more than 70 per cent of the labour force in some agriculture-intensive economies (ILO). Rural women face challenges and discrimination that are often linked to their sex. The dire conditions faced by rural women - lack of decent job opportunities, poverty, gender and ethnic discrimination, civil and political conflicts, climate-induced emergencies – are among the push factors that force women to migrate to urban areas, cities and across borders. They take up work that do not match their skills, or are forced to seek employment outside their home countries, usually as care workers and domestic workers. MFA therefore dedicates its actions and activities on this important day to all migrant women workers and migrant domestic workers for their continuous and significant contributions to our societies.

The adoption of ILO Convention 189—Decent Work for Domestic Workers on June 16th 2011 is a landmark victory towards securing the rights of domestic workers. This Convention recognizes domestic workers as *workers*, with rights that are equal to those of all other workers regardless of citizenship or legal status.

In celebration of International Women's Day, MFA welcomes the announcement by Singapore's Minister of State for Manpower on March 5th, that Singapore is to introduce a mandatory weekly day off for domestic workers from 1st January 2013. We hope to see further steps taken to ensure that all domestic workers enjoy regular days off and that this may encourage other states in the region that have no mandatory day off for domestic workers to introduce similar measures. We also urge the Singapore government to ratify and implement ILO Convention 189 on domestic work.

We also recognize the continuing challenges faced by women migrant workers including migrant domestic workers. The pervasive culture of discrimination and gender-based violence prevalent in Asia has seriously affected women's rights. As a result, their fundamental rights — the rights to life, health, security, mobility, political participation, and employment — are seriously violated, limiting their choices in all spheres of life. We also recognize that women migrant workers experience abuse in the various stages of migration and unjustly contend with dubious practices of recruitment agencies, merciless abuses and risks for exploitation, long working hours, the withholding of wages and slavery like conditions.

We note that many countries do not recognize domestic work as work and women migrant domestic workers are often subject to the denial of decent work and living conditions.

Migrant Forum in Asia, in solidarity with domestic workers and all workers in the informal sector, call on governments to recall and follow through on their ethical and legal obligations to extend to both local and migrant domestic workers the same rights as extended to all other workers, without discrimination on the basis of citizenship, gender, or legal status; in particular:

1. Ratify and implement ILO Convention 189 on domestic Work – Ratification signifies recognition of domestic workers as workers and upholds their rights to freedom of association, and to form and join associations and trade unions
2. Recognize the contributions of Migrant Domestic Workers in the economies of countries of origin and destination
3. Recognize the right of domestic workers to a Living Wage: States must guarantee that all migrant domestic workers are paid a living wage for their work, on par with that which is paid to local workers within their jurisdiction.
4. Recognize the Right to a Weekly Day Off: All domestic workers must be guaranteed a full day of rest each week
5. Recognize the right of Access to Justice: All domestic workers must be guaranteed access to adequate legal representation and redress mechanisms under the legal system of the state, regardless of their citizenship or legal status.
6. Ratify and implement the 1990 UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families

Migrant Forum in Asia

MFA is a regional network of non-government organizations (NGOs), associations and trade unions of migrant workers, and individual advocates in Asia that are committed to protect and promote the rights and welfare of migrant workers. It is guided by a vision of an alternative world system based on respect for human rights and dignity, social justice, and gender equity, particularly for migrant workers.